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ABSTRACT

These activity cards represent a way for teachers to supplement the content of the curriculum with activities that address the concept of conflict. Students become aware of conflicts in their lives and discover individual methods for coping with those conflicts. The cards contain action-oriented activities to enable students to learn through active participation and first-hand experience. Each card presents a conflict concept based on identified objectives of the unit and then provides opportunities for application of the concept to other real life or personal situations. The cards are loosely arranged in ascending order according to the objectives and can be adapted to fit different age groups and students. Objectives include: (1) recognize and identify various kinds of conflict; (2) discover the presence of conflict in every day life; (3) recognize the presence of power, emotion, and violence in conflicts; (4) identify and understand all sides of a conflict; (5) accept responsibility for one's actions in conflict situations; (6) practice negotiation skills; and (7) generate alternative ways of resolving or coping with conflict. (EH)

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CONFLICT ACTIVITY CARDS

GRADES 9-12

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CONFLICT ACTIVITY CARDS

These conflict activity cards represent a simple but effective way for the classroom teacher to supplement the content of her/his curriculum with activities that address the concept of conflict. Conflict is present at every level of people's lives and is encountered every day. Using the cards will help students become aware of conflicts in their lives and help them discover individual methods for coping with conflict. The concepts learned and skills acquired can be expanded outside of both the students' personal lives and the classroom, and can be applied to family, community, and world situations.

The cards are action-oriented to enable students to learn through active participation and first-hand experience. Each card is formatted to first present a conflict concept based on the seven objectives listed below ("TRY THIS"), and then to provide further applications of the concept to other real life or personal situations ("MORE"). The cards are loosely arranged in ascending order according to the following objectives, from recognizing and identifying conflicts to generating viable alternatives. Each card can be easily adapted to fit different age groups and most of the objectives below.

The basic objectives of this book are to provide activities which teach students to:

1) Recognize and identify various kinds of conflict;
2) Discover the presence of conflict in every day life;
3) Recognize the presence of power, emotion, violence, etc. in conflicts;
4) Identify and understand all sides of a conflict, including distinguishing between the internal, the interpersonal, the intergroup and the international sides;
5) Accept responsibility for ones actions in conflict situations;
6) Practice negotiating skills; and
7) Generate alternative ways of resolving or coping with conflict.

The conflict cards provide an opportunity for teachers to individualize classroom instruction and learning. They allow for flexibility in curriculum planning and learning pace, as well as freedom in choosing class activities. Although the cards are intended as a supplement to an educator's regular curriculum, they can be used occasionally, as issues of conflict arise naturally in the classroom. or intensively, as a special unit on conflict. The flexibility of these cards makes them applicable to every field of study at any time during the year.

There are many possible ways to utilize these cards. For instance, the cards can be discussed as a class or in small groups, individual students may be assigned specific cards, or students may browse through the cards to choose activities of particular interest to them. Some cards recommend activities outside the classroom, which should be encouraged if possible to help the students internalize a particular concept. There are many ways to learn the concepts on these cards, the activities provided are only suggestions. Students should be allowed and encouraged to expand the activities on the cards in their own creative fashion.

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TRY THIS: Cut out newspaper articles that involve some kind of conflict. Sort them into as many categories as you can. For instance:

- -- resolvable/unresolvable
- -- local/national/international
- -- friendly/hostile

MORE: * Make a visual display or report to the class about the categories you chose and the results you found. Did more conflicts occur under violent/non-violent, confusing/simple, funny/sad, etc.?

* Compare the types of issues within each group. Are there any patterns that developed? What are they? What conclusions can you make about conflict based on these patterns?

TRY THIS: Using the newspaper or a news magazine, make a list of current conflicts. Decide whether the conflicts are social, cultural, political, economic, religious, environmental, ethnic, etc. What kinds of conflicts seem to be the most prevalent?

MORE: * Explain the role of cultural, religious, ethnic, etc., positions in conflicts. Does one group have to sacrifice their values or positions in order to resolve the conflict? Why or why not?

* Select a conflict and interview people representing each side. To what extent do the factors listed above affect their positions?

TRY THIS: Consider the following four statements and discuss what would happen if students displayed posters with these statements on the outside of their lockers: one featuring a religious statement; one, an ethnic joke; one, a political cartoon; and one, an American proverb. Identify possible objections people might have to each of the statements.

MORE:

* Rewrite the statements in a less objectionable form.

* Discuss the problems with freedom of speech. How and why do people or governments try to control what is said or written?

TRY THIS: Using an outline map of the world, plot major areas of conflict. Use a key to indicate the areas of high conflict versus low and moderate areas of conflict. Can you find any commonalties among the areas of high conflict (e.g., location, climate, economic, political)?

MORE:

* Research some world conflicts and see where they fit on your map. Do the origins of the conflicts correlate to reasons suggested in your map? Why or why not?

* Make a conflict map of your home, school or city showing areas of high and low conflict.

* Using this information, is it possible to prevent some of these conflicts?

TRY THIS: Research the last 100 years of an ongoing international conflict. Chart your research in a cause/effect format. What patterns develop?

MORE:

* Change an early "cause" and make a new chart showing how things might have been different.

* Project cause/effect chart into the future. Write foreign policy statements based on projection.

* Consider how you would answer the following questions:
    1) When are parties willing to negotiate?
    2) What constitutes successful negotiation?
    3) Why do some attempts at peaceful resolution of conflict fail?

TRY THIS: Watch a television program. Identify a conflict depicted and explain how it was resolved.

MORE:

* Identify other points of view about the conflict in the program.

* Discuss whether or not you feel the TV conflict and its resolution were the "real life" situations. Why or why not? If not, what would be a "real life" solution?

* How would your family or friends resolve the conflict?

* Tape record another TV program. Watch the taped program and stop the tape before the conflict is resolved. Solve the conflict before seeing the end and write down your solution. Finish watching the tape and compare the two solutions.

TRY THIS: Write about the biggest argument/disagreement between yourself and your parents. How was this resolved? How do you feel about it now?

MORE:

* Role play the situation with your friend(s), with you taking the role of your parent(s). Would the end be the same? Do you still feel the same? Did your views change? What are the conditions under which you would change your view?

* Write a letter to yourself from the point of view of your parent(s). List what you gained from your personal view. What did you lose as a result of your action?

* Make a chart showing the actions that you took to resolve the conflicts and the results of your actions. How did your parents respond?

* Make a list of potential conflicts between you and your parents. Rank them in order of importance from your perspective and from their perspective.

TRY THIS: Compile the conflicts that might happen in one day if you were the President of the United States, a Roman slave, an outlaw, a Native American or African chief, or any other person in history.

MORE:

* How did your person achieve her/his goals? Did s/he prevent others from achieving their goals?

* How did your person deal with conflicts? Write a poem, a story, or draw a picture explaining your person's strategy.

* Select a person in your family, your school, or your community. Compare their conflicts with your historical person's conflicts. What is similar or different about their situations, styles, resolutions?

TRY THIS: Pick a job which interests you. Interview a person in that job and find out what conflicts are part of the job. How are these conflicts usually resolved? How should they be resolved?

MORE:

* Interview your mother/father/neighbor. What conflicts are part of their jobs?

* Decide if you would want a job knowing some of the conflicts that are included in it. What skills or values would you have to hold to be able to successfully deal with the conflict involved in the job? What about the job makes it worthwhile in spite of the conflicts?

* Rank a selection of jobs. Which have the most or least conflicts? Which include the most/least violence? In what jobs is the person's main task to help resolve conflicts?

TRY THIS: Contact the A.C.L.U. for civil rights information. Research hiring policies in your local fire and police departments. Find verifiable statistics on the number of Blacks, Latinos, women, etc., on the local staffs of these departments.

MORE:

* Compare data from before and after affirmative action rulings.

* What influence has the legislation had in solving racial tensions or inequalities?

* Interview two members of the local police force who are of different cultural heritage. Find out how affirmative action legislation has affected them.

TRY THIS: Make a list of some of the most powerful people in your life, in school, in the world. How do these people use their power? What conflicts do you have with these people? Find out how these people resolve their conflicts.

MORE:

* What do these people have in common? Are they older, bigger, wiser, etc. than you or most people? Do they more often win conflicts, avoid conflicts, or influence outcomes of conflicts?

* What are the clues that a person is powerful? Look at dress, language, money, etc.

* Find out if the people think they have as much power as you think they do.

* Which is the most powerful country in the world? Explain.

TRY THIS: Change the attitude "climate" at home, school, or work by anonymously "committing acts of kindness" for one week. (Try this on people other than close friends). Take note of reactions and feelings when your kindnesses are discovered. Write down your reactions each day after you have completed your act of kindness.

MORE:

* At the end of the week, compare your perceptions with what you wrote at the beginning of the week. Has the "climate" changed?

* How significant were your actions in altering the "climate" of your classroom, school, home? Would it help to work as a group instead of by yourself to improve the "climate?" How would this make a difference?

TRY THIS: As a class, select a controversial issue (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse, gang violence). Brainstorm with a partner all the conflicts surrounding the issue. Why are there so many problems with the issue? Show how the issue affects the individual, family, friends, community and society as a whole.

MORE:

* What role does peer pressure play in this issue? What other problems involve peer pressure? Discuss with the class how the power of peer pressure could be reduced. When is peer pressure good?

* Who should be responsible for these problems? What should be done to correct them?

* Visit a middle school class and discuss with the students ways to handle peer pressure in high school.

TRY THIS: Look for the humor in conflict situations. Check the newspaper comics. Which comics portray an ongoing conflict in a humorous way?

MORE:

* What makes the comics funny? Which cartoons involve humor using put-downs or sarcasm? Which use other types of humor?

* Choose an area of conflict and design your own cartoon character to deal with it in a humorous way. Create a comic strip with your characters in the conflict. Draw how they resolve the conflict.

* List several recent conflicts of own. Search for humor you might have missed. How might it have helped you resolve the conflicts?

TRY THIS: Take a photograph or find pictures which show how people let others know the boundary of their territory. Do we all need our own territory? Why?

MORE:

* What territory is most important to you?

* Represent in art or media all the ways in which people or animals protect their territory. Compare our ideas about territory to those of animals.

* Document international conflicts that deal with territory. What kind of territory was/is at stake?

* Do different cultures have different ideas about the extent of or marking territory?

* Map the boundaries of your school or house. Who controls which territory?

TRY THIS: Divide the class into groups with each group in "control" of unequal portions of the property and space in the classroom. Mark or tag the property to show ownership. Throughout a normal day see what types of conflicts develop. How are the conflicts resolved?

MORE:

* How did the students feel when they were not allowed free access to areas of the room they could normally use? How did students feel when they had ultimate control of property and space that others wanted or needed?

* Have the group in control of the most property and space slowly try and gain control of the rest of the classroom. What sort of resistance develops?

* Can you relate these situations to any present or historical real-life situations? Explain the similarities. Are these situations resolved? Why or why not?

TRY THIS: Identify an issue (e.g., abortion, teenage marriage, condoms in the schools) on which you disagree with your parents. Interview two people in your parents' age group and two people in your grandparents' age group for their opinions on the issue. How do they compare?

MORE:

* Is there a generational view or an individual view?

* Write a letter to the American Association of Retired Persons requesting their support of this "youth" issue and explain why they should support it.

* Arrange a panel discussion of the topic using a wide range of people.

* Conduct a formal survey in your school checking opinions for and against this issue.

TRY THIS: Dress as a poor person (or some other social nonconformist - i.e. a punker or a hippie, or a skinhead) and go to a local mall. Go into five different stores and ask salespeople for assistance as you "shop". Behave and speak as you would normally. Repeat the assignment dressed as a conservative, rich person (or the opposite of your first costume).

MORE: * How did the sales clerk treat you in each instance and what did s/he say? Do you feel you were treated differently than usual?

* Interview a friend or acquaintance in sales/retail work on how customer appearance affects them and why.

* What are the problems with "judging a book by its cover"? Have you ever misjudged someone on the basis of her/his appearances? What happened? How did you come to change your opinion?

* What does the way we dress communicate to other people?

* How do groups use appearance to display their views?

TRY THIS: Take the viewpoint of an animal, plant, or limited resource in an ecosystem. Identify yourself and your ecosystem. Write a letter or a speech to Mr. or Ms. Industry USA explaining why saving you is more important than the industry's profits.

MORE:

* Who else in the ecosystem depends on you? What future do you predict for the ecosystem if you are eliminated?

* Can you offer Mr. or Ms. Industry an alternative source of revenue?

* Identify "others" who have already become extinct and explain the long-term impact this has had.

* In case you lose this argument, write your epitaph.

TRY THIS: Select a school rule (e.g., dress codes). Interview different people (parent, student, teacher, principal, security officer, etc.) about their views on the subject. Present the various positions to the class.

MORE:

* Discuss why there is a need for rules. Think about what people's lives would be like if there were no rules.

* Do countries need rules when they deal with each other? Why? What are these rules?

* Cut out newspaper articles about people following or not following rules. Discuss what makes people break rules.

TRY THIS: Choose a partner to work with and together select an environmental issue (e.g., logging, Ozone layer, endangered species). Have each partner choose a side of the controversy and research the issue from that perspective. Present your findings to the class.

MORE:

* Find out who is in charge of policy making for that issue in government and non-governmental organizations. Write a letter expressing your concerns and suggest solutions or changes to the policy.

* Write an article explaining the two sides of your issue to an environmental publication.

* Debate the issues in class.

* Set up an environmental exhibit in your school. Each group can create a booth describing their issue. Invite other classes to view your exhibit.

TRY THIS: Divide the class into the following four groups: Washington-based diplomats; small businessmen/women; Midwestern farmers; and inner-city minorities. Give the same list of news topics to each group and have them assemble a newspaper which serves the interests and needs of their particular group. They must decide on the headline stories and placement of the articles.

MORE:

* Compare the differences and similarities of the newspapers.

* Why do some groups give different priorities to different problems?

* In your own communities find examples of publications which illustrate the interests of specific groups. Compare them.

TRY THIS: Define what an enemy is. How could an enemy become a friend? How do enemies communicate with each other?

MORE: * List situations in which you would be forced to cooperate with your enemy. What situations in world history are there where enemies cooperated?

* How do friends turn into enemies? Discover how different national groups have become enemies or friends of the USA at different times.

TRY THIS: Decide where a new school, park, animal pound, library, or other public attraction should be built in your neighborhood. Find out where parents, teachers, neighbors, and public officials think it should be built. What conflicts arise?

MORE:

* Find out who in your community is responsible for administering building permits. How are permits awarded?

* What are some of the problems that can be encountered during the construction process? How can these problems be avoided?

* Research a public site in your neighborhood. Find out who decided to build it, who opposed the building, who financed the building, etc. Write a report and present it to the class. Submit your report to your local newspaper.

TRY THIS: Research the history of one or more groups of Native Americans. How has their situation changed? What factors are responsible for these changes? Do you think these changes were for the better or for the worse? Why?

MORE:

* What can be done to alter the current state of different Native American groups? What can you do to help?

* Write a letter to a member of Congress or to the leader(s) of the Native American group suggesting how situations could be altered.

* What are the situations of other ethnic groups in your area or in the United States? How could any of these situations be changed for the better?

TRY THIS: Think of all the things you are responsible for at school, at home, at work, etc. Write an essay explaining what would happen if you refused to accept these responsibilities.

MORE:

* How do your responsibilities change as you get older?

* Interview your parents, a community leader, or other adults, about their responsibilities. How do they manage multiple responsibilities?

* What happens in the community if people do not accept their responsibilities?

TRY THIS: Select a current, unsolved international dispute. Divide the class into groups that represent each country in the dispute, plus a mediating country. (Example -- Israel, Palestine, and the United States as mediator). Each group should research their particular side of the dispute. Countries should set an agenda, state their formal positions and attempt a mock negotiation session.

MORE: * Was a resolution reached? How? Was there a compromise? Did both sides win something and give something? What were the difficulties in reaching the solution? If a solution was not reached, how was the negotiation process successful?

* How did each side indicate what their demands were? What role did the mediating country play?

* How would you play this game differently if you were on a different negotiating team?

TRY THIS: Select a conflict and describe how the particular conflict improved the overall situation.

MORE:

* Convince someone who did not feel that a conflict was useful that it was. Did you know that the conflict would be useful when it began?

* What would change a conflict situation from dysfunctional to functional?

* Can you describe a conflict that is only positive or only negative? Can there be both in the same situation? Explain.

TRY THIS: Find pictures of the use of force or violence. Does violence settle a conflict? Increase it? Decide when and where violence works and does not work in resolving conflicts.

MORE: * If someone wins using violence, does that person also lose something. How?

* How you can achieve your goals without the use of violence? Explain how people in history, such as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., used nonviolent tactics to resolve conflicts. What impact did their nonviolent tactics have on their causes and on the world?

TRY THIS: Brainstorm ways that individuals solve conflict (avoidance, violence, compromise, etc.). Discuss the pros and cons of each method. Which method works best most of the time? Is there ever a controversy over which method to use? Why?

MORE:

* Select a conflict and role play solutions several times using the various methods mentioned in class. Which method was most constructive in generating an acceptable solution for all parties? Why were the other methods not as constructive?

* Select the most constructive method and use it to resolve all your personal conflicts for a day or a week. Was this beneficial? Can you always use the same method of conflict resolution? Why or why not?